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Mr. Druery on Fern Nomenclature and on the Collection of Ferns for Herbarium Purposes

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Mr. Druery's notes on fern nomenclature, on another page, call for some explanation, since they seem to indicate that he believes the FERN JOURNAL has an "official" fern nomenclature. He speaks of the "nomenclature adopted by the AMERICAN FERN JOURNAL." This should be expressed "the nomenclature adopted by the writers in the AMERICAN FERN JOURNAL," since the first principle of the JOURNAL has always been that contributors are always free to use any nomenclature they may prefer as long as they adopt one consistently. As a matter of fact, the editor is partial to the name *Dryopteris*, but the managing editor and the elected officers would probably all favor *Aspidium*, and undoubtedly votes would still be cast for *Nephrodium* if the matter were submitted to the vote of the Society.

Mr. Druery favors *Nephrodium* because this name bears directly on the kidney shaped indusia characteristic of most of the species of this genus, but he notes *Lastraea* as the accepted name in England. Is not this itself an illustration of the practice to which he makes objection, the use of superfluous names "to the puzzlement of fernists"? The use of scientific names which have direct application to the genus in question, however ideal it might seem, is unfortunately a counsel of perfection. If it were to be followed to its logical conclusion in the realm of nomenclature, it would mean so wholesale a revision of existing names that the changes incident to the adoption of the modern rules based on priority would fade in insignificance.

Besides his reference to the present difference of opinion as regards the proper name for shield ferns in England, Mr. Druery affords another illuminating hint as to one of the principal reasons for the development of

the modern system of nomenclature in the following sentence: "In our old British fern literature we find that hardly a single name is retained nowadays, subsequent experience having displayed their inaccuracy and led to correction." This is exactly the *raison d'être* for the modern system as exemplified in the codes adopted at Vienna and Brussels, i. e., the correction of inaccuracies of the previous system or lack of system of nomenclature. The fact that the scientists of practically all nations are meeting periodically and are finding more and more common ground on which all can agree gives assurance that we are approaching the unanimity of usage which is to be desired.

In the matter of the collection of ferns for herbarium purposes, comment is called for because of Mr. Druery's article published in the January number for 1914. Mr. Druery refers to a specific case of herbarium collecting as "another act of vandalism," the implication being that acts of vandalism are frequent in America.

From Mr. Druery's standpoint it may be that many of us are too careless about preserving plants in a living state, and too anxious to have many different forms represented in our herbaria. His criticism, however, does not take into consideration the very different conditions under which fern study is carried on in this country as compared with those of England. When these conditions are borne in mind, there appears to be very little basis for his charge.

The criticism implies that an American collector always has the choice between collecting any particular plant for his herbarium or for a fern garden. The facts are, however, very different. Fern gardens are infrequent with us, partly because a smaller proportion of people have space or inclination for a garden, and because fern culture is much more difficult here than in

England. The average collector has to choose not between pressing the fern and growing it, but between pressing it and leaving it with considerable chance at times that it may not be there when he returns. The reclaiming of land for cultivation, or for dwellings, or the trampling of cattle are frequent causes of the disappearance of all sorts of wild treasures. The transplanting of ferns liable to destruction in this manner would not necessarily save them, for back-yard culture of ferns is seldom successful unless special pains are taken to transplant also large amounts of soil at the same time, and even with this precaution failures are numerous.

Certainly it is much to be regretted that more members of the Fern Society are not interested in fern growing here in America, and it is to be hoped that all who have facilities will work to develop collections of living ferns and will make themselves known so that other less fortunate members may know where they can send living plants with a reasonable chance that they will be preserved. It should be most strongly emphasized, however, that any indiscriminate criticism, especially as regards any specific herbarium collection, is entirely without justification. Charges of vandalism should not be made unless backed by detailed proofs.

American Fern Society

Changed address: Fermen L. Pickett, Pullman, Washington. Prof. S. Fred Prince, Notch, Stone Co., Mo.

New Members: Franklin A. Barnes, Bellona, Yates Co., N. Y.; Major Herman Burgin, U. S. A., 63 West Cheltenham Ave., Germantown, Pa.; Mrs. Ethelwyn F. Merrill, Northwood Narrows, N. H.